

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY ACCRA PRIORITY

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FOL REPEAT TUNIS 02384 ACTION SECSTATE INFO TRIPOLI FREETOWN

3 APR.

QUOTE

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DEPARTMENT PASS AS DESIRED

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, ELAB, TS

SUBJECT: TUNISIA-LIBYA CONFLICT: TRADE UNION ROLE

REF: TUNIS 1746, TUNIS 1833, TUNIS 2192, STATE 78514,
FREETOWN 983

1. EXPULSIONS SINCE MARCH 1 OF TUNISIAN WORKERS FROM
LIBYA NOW APPROACHING 9,000, ROUGHLY WP PCNT OF TUNISIANS
RESIDENT IN LIBYA. GOT-CONTROLLED MEDIA CONTINUE TO
REPORT DAILY ON EXPULSIONS, ALTHOUGH EMPHASIS ON SUPPOSED
VIOLATION BY LAG OF BILATERAL WORKER EXCHANGE AGREEMENTS
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HAS BEEN TONED DOWN AND ALLEGATIONS OF GROSS PHYSICAL

MISTREATMENT OF TUNISIANS HAVE ALL BUT DISAPPEARED. WE HAVE IMPRESSION THAT RECENT EXPULSIONS, UNLIKE LARGE NUMBER OF THOSE IN EARLY-MARCH, INVOLVE TUNISIANS HOLDING VALID GOT TRAVEL DOCUMENTS. IT NOT RPT NOT UNLIKELY, HOWEVER, THAT MAJORITY OF CURRENT DEPORTEES LACK VALID LIBYAN WORK PERMITS.

2. GOT NOW PLACING NEWS EMPHASIS ON EFFORTS TO REINTEGRATE RETURNED WORKERS INTO LOCAL ECONOMY. WHILE TUNISIAN ECONOMY PLAGUED WITH CHRONIC UNEMPLOYMENT IN RANGE OF 10 TO 15 PCNT, GOT HAS REGULARLY NOTED LACK OF WORKERS IN CERTAIN CATEGORIES SUCH AS AGRICULTURAL LABOR AND CONSTRUCTION WORK. BOTH PRESS REPORTS AND OUR PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS WITH RESPONSIBLE GOT OFFICIALS INDICATE THAT RETURNED WORKERS WHO ARE GETTING JOBS ARE PLACED IN THESE TWO, RELATIVELY UNATTRACTIVE SECTORS OF THE ECONOMY.

3. GENERAL UNION OF TUNISIAN WORKERS (UGTT) HAS JOINED GOT ANTO-LIBYA CAMPAIGN IN MEDIA. AS REPORTED IN TUNIS 1833, UGTT DENOUNCED EXPULSIONS TO ARAB TRADE UNION ORGANIZATION AS A "VIOLATION OF HUMAN DIGNITY." UGTT SECRETARY GENERAL HABIB ACHOUR TOLD US IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION THAT HE TAKES LIBYAN EXPULSIONS AS SERIOUS AFFRONT TO TUNISIAN WORKERS AND REGARDS COLONEL QADHAFI AS AN ENEMY OF FREE TRADE UNIONISM IN GENERAL. AS DO MANY TUNISIANS, HOWEVER, ACHOUR LOOKS ON QADHAFI AS "CRAZY". AND NOT A SERIOUS THREAT TO TUNISIAN STABILITY. IN HUMOROUS SIDELIGHT, QADHAFI REPORTEDLY DECLARED IN SPEECH THAT HERKENNAH ISLANDS, ACHOUR'S HOME, BELONG TO LIBYA AND THEY WOULD BE SEIZED. PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA JOKED IN RECENT SPEECH THAT QADHAFI WILL HAVE TO DISCUSS THAT CLAIM WITH HABIB ACHOUR.

3. UGTT REFUSAL TO ATTEND DATUU MEETING IN TRIPOLI IS A NATURAL TUNISIAN REACTION AND WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT ACHOUR'S MIND WILL BE CHANGED. AFTER THE ABORTIVE LIBYAN ASSASSINATION PLOT AGAINST PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA, THE EXPULSION AND MISTREATMENT OF TUNISIAN WORKERS, AND THE ABUSIVE PROPAGANDA DIRECTED AGAINST TUNISIA BY LARG IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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RECENT WEEKS, IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR ANY TUNISIAN TO ATTEND A LARG HOSTED MEETING IN TRIPOLI.

4. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF UGTT TELEGRAM DATED MARCH 24 SENT TO "ALL AFRICAN TRADE UNION ORGANIZATIONS: "QUOTE UGTT EXECUTIVE BUREAU, HAVING EXAMINED CRIMINAL ACTION OF LIBYAN REGIME ESPECIALLY FOLLOWING DISCOVERY OF SEVERAL IGNOBLE PLOTS SEEKING TO ESTABLISH A CLIMATE OF

TERROR, KIDNAPPINGS AND ASSASSINATIONS IN SEVERAL AFRICAN COUNTRIES THEREBY IGNORING ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, DECIDES THAT TUNISIA WILL NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE AFRICAN TRADE UNION UNITY CONGRESS IN LIBYA. UGTT URGENTLY ASKS YOU TO INTERVENE WITH OATUU FOR PUR AND SIMPLE CANCELLATION OF HOLDING OF THIS CONGRESS IN TRIPOLI. WE ARE DISPOSED TO ATTEND AND PARTICIPATE IN ANY OTHER AFRICAN COUNTRY. PLEASE ADVISE. FRATERNAL GREETINGS. HABIB ACHOUR, SECRETARY GENERAL OF UGTT. END QUOTE.

IDENTICAL MESSAGE WAS SENT TO J.D. AKUMU, OATUU SECRETARY GENERAL, IN ACCRA WITH NOTIFICATION THAT UGTT SECRETARY FOR TRADE UNION EDUCATION KHLIFA ABID WOULD PROVIDE AKUMU WITH FULLER DETAILS. ABID LEFT TUNIS APRIL 2. FOR VISIT TO AFRICAN COUNTRIES TO EXPLAIN UGTT ACTION. AS OF APRIL 3, UGTT HAS NOT RECEIVED ANY REPLIES.

5. UGTT EXECUTIVE BUREAU ALSO ISSUED A COMMUNIQUE ON MARCH 24 CONCERNING RELATIONS WITH LIBYA. IN ADDITION TO REFERENCES TO LIBYAN PLOTS AND OTHER DESTRUCTIVE ACTIONS, THE UGTT NOTED THE "MASSIVE AND ARBITRARY EXPULSIONS" OF TUNISIAN WORKERS AND THEIR BAD TREATMENT BY LIBYAN AUTHORITIES AND ANNOUNCED THAT TUNISIA WOULD NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE TRIPOLI CONGRESS OF THE OATUU.

6. RE PARA 3, STATE REFTTEL, LARG WAS ALREADY EXPELLING TUNISIAN WORKERS BEFORE THE ALEXANDRIA CONFERENCE BEGAN MARCH 6, AND STORY BROKE AS MAJOR NEWS ITEM HERE MARCH 10. KING

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